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Teens want more writing

Predicting College Success with the SAT

It has been a busy season for SAT. New studies are out that show the SAT's strength in predicting college success. SAT® scores, coupled with high school grades, provide colleges with a powerful barometer for predicting academic success, concluded the latest studies of the national benchmark test. The College Board's 2008 SAT Validity Studies are the first to reveal information about the full cohort of students who have taken the SAT since the March 2005 addition of a required writing section. The College Board is encouraging colleges and universities to take a fresh look at their policies toward standardized tests, high school grades, academic rigor, and other decision criteria. We are asking them to determine if they will require all applicants to send all their standardized exam results. If so, they should consider alerting secondary schools in as many ways as possible to new policies toward the use of "best scores", deadlines, and reasons for any differences in such policies between SAT and ACT.

SAT Score Reporting Policy

The policy was approved by our Board of Trustees last month. This new policy will give students the option of sending scores to colleges only for the test date that they feel best represents their ability, at no additional cost. Our intention is to reduce student stress and improve the test-day experience. We fully appreciate the anxiety surrounding high stakes exams and concerns by students that they have "only one chance to make a first impression" with you. It will be offered as an option starting with the March 2009 exam—in essence, for the Class of 2010. Please note that the default option we encourage for all test takers will be for them to send official exam scores from all their sittings to their designated colleges and scholarship agencies.

SAT/ACT Concordance Table

An independent third party built the statistical analysis off a large cohort of 2006 students who took both the ACT and our SAT with Writing. These tables update the ones produced in 1999 you've probably been using. They help compare the SAT Critical Reading-plus-Math scores with the ACT Composite. You will notice small changes from the earlier Concordance, in particular at the top end of the scales. More significantly, we've "concorded" students who took both tests' Writing exams, comparing the SAT Writing scores with the ACT Writing-plus-ACT English scores. These comparisons are not estimates.

Beware the percentile trap, by the way, for students and parents who want to know which score was "better". As with our previous Concordance study, an ACT-C score of 21 is the best possible estimate of an SAT CR+M of 990. But while the 21

instruction? Learn more from the National Writing Commission

Don't Forget

The last date for schools outside the United States to reduce PSAT/NMSQT test book orders is August 1.

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puts a student in the 55th percentile of ACT takers, a 990 ranks in only the 45th percentile of SAT takers.

SAT Validity Study

The validity study was carefully built from the performance of 151,000 freshmen at 110 four-year colleges of all types. This is the first cohort who'd taken the new SAT with Writing. Among the notable early findings:

- The SAT is a better predictor than high school grades for all minority groups (African American, Hispanic, American Indian and Asian);
- The Writing section is the most predictive of the three SAT sections;
- Writing is the most predictive section of the SAT for every subgroup except ESL students;
- The three-hour and 45-minute SAT is almost as predictive as four years of high school grades; and
- The best predictor of first-year college GPA is still a combination of high school GPA along with SAT scores.

Writing and the SAT

The new writing section, which is mandatory for SAT takers, was shown to be the single most predictive section of the test for all students. The analyses also found the writing section to be the most predictive across all minority groups.



"Writing as a college-level skill is a crucial asset for student success, an important message reinforced by colleges that require admissions tests with a writing section," said College Board President Gaston Caperton. "Colleges not requiring an admissions test with writing are overlooking one of the best predictors of college success to which they have access. Writing should not be optional."